How to prevent break-ins in 5 affordable steps.



Home security systems are effective at reducing crime, identifying culprits, and increasing peace of mind. But before you invest in a system, or if you already have one and want to add even more security, there are other affordable ways to banish burglars. Learn how to secure your home and prevent break-ins in five easy steps.

1. **Lock your doors and windows.** A large percentage of break-ins occur without the use of force. That's because burglars are often looking for the easiest places to rob. Some simply go door to door until they find a home that isn't locked. Burglars like sliding doors because they're quiet, and older models can be lifted off their tracks, making it easier to break in. An easy fix? Put a steel bar or broom handle into the track or purchase a glass door lock to secure the door. Check that all windows and doors are fully shut and locked before going to bed or leaving for the day.

2. **Consider getting a dog.** Among the top factors that deter thieves from selecting a home? Security cameras, barking dogs, fences, gates, and motion-activated security lights. Owning a dog or posting a sign on your door that indicates you do can help stop intruders from targeting your house.

3. **Invest in strategic landscaping.** Some plant varieties are so spiky and thorny that planting them near your house is like putting up barbed wire. Rose bushes and climbing roses are great choices because they look beautiful and can help fend off intruders. A landscaper can help you choose good security trees and bushes. But on the flip side, don't add too many hedges or dense plants around your home. They can create secure hiding places for thieves and make matters worse.

4. **Keep your vacations to yourself.** You may be dying to post that photo of yourself surfing the big waves in Hawaii, but do yourself a favor: Wait until you get home. Telling your followers, and others

who can see your profile, you're not home is an invitation to burglars. Likewise, make it look like you are home. Discontinue any newspapers that would pile up in your driveway, have a friend or family member bring in mail and packages, and set your indoor and outdoor lights on a timer. Consider turning your TV on at different intervals so burglars can hear voices coming from inside your house.

5. **Fake burglars out.** Some security systems are surprisingly affordable, but you know what's even less expensive? Faking it. Post a sign in your yard that says your home is protected by a security system. Even police say that's enough to deter some lazier thieves. For less than $10, you can buy lookalike security cameras to mount around the exterior of your home, complete with flashing red lights and wiring. Some even come with a sticker you can put on your front window, warning burglars that they are under surveillance.

Now that you know how to prevent burglars, take a few precautions to make your home as unattractive as possible. But just in case, having adequate homeowners insurance can help cover any losses. Talk to a local, independent agent about coverage.

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